

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the so-called ``Scholarship for Opportunity and Results Act" H.R. 471. Private school vouchers are not an effective way to improve student achievement.

I do not support private school voucher programs. Not only do these programs sometimes blur the line between church and state, but there is also little evidence that this type of reform actually helps students. In fact, I am very concerned that vouchers do nothing more than drain money out of our public school system, especially from the schools that need the most financial assistance from the federal government.

In 2004, I opposed the creation District of Columbia's private school voucher program and I have repeatedly voted against proposals to use federal funds to support voucher programs. H.R. 471 seeks to bring back to life a failed voucher program that Congress has already voted to end.

The bill before us today would spend another \$100 million on a program that the evidence tells us does not work. Four separate U.S. Department of Education reports found that that the DC voucher program had no statistically significant effect on reading or math achievement. So why are we spending more today when the evidence is clear? We must not put ideology ahead of evidence. We must make decisions after weighing the evidence. If you do that, then you will oppose new funding for private school vouchers.

Further, this bill does nothing to help American students in the other 50 states. Parents, teachers, students, and school officials across New Jersey want to know what we are doing to address their needs. Why are we only talking about students in the District of Columbia?

I will continue to voice my opposition to this and other voucher programs that divert needed resources from our public schools and urge rejection of this measure.